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SUBJECT: FINAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION OF THE TRANSITION
BEGINS

Classified By: A/DCM MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) Following weeks of behind-the-scenes negotiations and deal making, the final plenary session of the National Assembly opened May 3, with Thomas Luhaka presiding as the new President of the Assembly. (Note: Luhaka was named in November 2005 by Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba to replace Olivier Kamitatu, who lost his position when he was removed from Bemba's MLC party. End Note.) The plenary has only three agenda items at the moment, two laws on the justice sector and one on violence against women. Luhaka told PolCouns May 3 that he resisted calls by Vice President Azarias Ruberwa to include a motion to reopen the electoral law to consider adding an additional 55 seats to the future National Assembly, but cautioned that he expects Ruberwa to continue to press for this point as it is related to his desire to ensure Banyamulenge representation in the future government.

¶2. (C) Comment: The months of painstaking negotiations -- including the exchange of large sums of cash -- seem finally to have paid off. The opening went smoothly, and the anodyne legislative agenda should likewise proceed fairly easily for the about six weeks of this final session of the transitional legislature. Aside from the electoral law question, the only potential flashpoint is the question of the possible dismissal of up to 80 Parliamentarians who, like Kamitatu, have either changed political allegiances voluntarily or been expelled by their parties, and therefore should technically not occupy their seats. Part of the political negotiations leading to the opening of the session, however, addressed this issue, and only a few pre-selected "sacrifices" are expected actually to lose their places. End comment.
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